

Islamic finance education for university students: a scoping review of the Scopus database

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ABSTRACT

Universities must catch up in providing the Islamic financial services industry (IFSI) with a trained and competent workforce. The discrepancy between university offerings and the IFSI's needs highlights a research gap in this field. To address this gap, we scoped the academic literature in the Scopus database on higher education for the IFSI involving university students. The research question guiding this scoping review was: what is known about Islamic finance education for university students in higher education literature? The findings of this study map the scope of research in this area, including the various research themes explored within this domain. For instance, a maximum of 15 articles were identified in line with the research question, covering four themes: talent development in Islamic banking education, curriculum and education quality, student career aspirations and intentions, and e-learning and technology in education. Most studies were conducted in Malaysia, and similarly, most studies utilized a quantitative approach based on surveys. Finally, research gaps are identified for further exploration based on the themes identified in the study.

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1. INTRODUCTION

After the opening of the first Islamic bank, the Dubai Islamic Bank, in 1975, the Islamic financial services industry (IFSI) is valued at an estimated USD 3.25 trillion in 2022, with expected growth forecast to reach USD 6.7 trillion by 2027 [1], [2]. Central to the growth of the IFSI is the industry compliance with Islamic principles such as interest-free transactions and risk-sharing products, amongst others, serving both muslim and non-muslim customers [3]–[5]. To date the IFSI, spans 60 countries across 14 jurisdictions, indicating increasing complexity with regard to standards, regulations, risks and opportunities, resulting in a need for specialized human resources to support the unique needs of the industry [6]–[10].

Effective human resource management is crucial for the sustainability and growth of the IFSI [11]–[13]. Studies conducted by Muafi *et al.* [14] and Samidi *et al.* [9] draw attention to the importance of talent management on employee performance, organizational health, and overall development of the IFSI. For instance, Tarabsheh [15] reports that Jordanian Islamic banks have implemented a variety of talent management schemes to retain and reward staff, thereby increasing the growth and competitiveness of these institutions. Others, such as El-Seoudi *et al.* [16], underscore the importance of talent management and succession planning for ensuring the continued engagement and development of a skilled workforce to support Islamic banking in Malaysia. Despite the important role of human resources in the IFSI, higher education institutions still fall short in providing a skilled workforce. The research gap in this area is evident from the disconnect between university

programs and curricula and the needs and requirements of the IFSI [17]–[20]. Furthermore, higher education institutions face a shortage of qualified academics and textbooks, when designing relevant training programs to support the industry [19], [21], [22]. Thus, it is evident that calls for more scholarly investigations into diverse aspects of Islamic banking and finance education are increasing [23]–[25].

One such area of scholarly interest pertains to graduates' preparedness for successful careers in the IFSI. In Nigeria, graduates within the discipline were found to have a limited awareness and knowledge of Islamic finance [20]. Others have pointed to the need to close the gap between curricula that align with industry needs and work readiness among graduates [26], [27]. For instance, strategies to improve the employability of graduates include admitting students well-suited for the programs, enhancing the curriculum, improving the overall quality of teaching, and involving industry practitioners to expose students to real-world issues in Islamic finance [26], [28]. Considering the preceding discussions, it is essential to map the research in this emerging field to understand students' viewpoints about the industry to improve the quality and relevance of educational offerings.

Given the growing importance and continued interest in the IFSI and the role of higher education institutions in supporting this industry, we conducted a scoping review of the academic literature on higher education for Islamic banking. Thus, the objectives of this scoping review are threefold. Firstly, we aim to identify the scope of literature on Islamic finance education for students within the context of higher education. Secondly, we aim to map the key themes; and thirdly, we aim to identify research gaps to guide future research.

2. METHOD

A scoping review asks broad questions about what has been done previously or what the literature says to descriptively map research in an emerging field by examining how research was undertaken in a domain and identifying knowledge gaps [29]–[31]. Thus, scoping reviews do not synthesize or evaluate the certainty of research findings. Instead, the mapping of literature is undertaken to describe the scope of evidence within a field related to time, location, source, and origin [29], [31]. This study is guided by the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) protocol, as outlined by Page *et al.* [32] for conducting a scoping review. It is structured along five steps, according to the framework suggested by Arksey and O'Malley [33] that was further refined by Levac *et al.* [34].

- Step 1: research question

A broad research question was identified to capture the breadth of evidence relevant to Islamic finance education involving university students. The research question is stated as follows: *what is known about Islamic finance education for university students within the higher education literature?*

The research question clarifies the focus of the scoping review, as it includes the concept, population, and outcomes articulating the scope of the inquiry. The concept covered is "Islamic finance education," particularly education initiatives, programs, and courses. The population includes university students at any level of study, encompassing those in existing Islamic finance education programs or related business courses. The study's outcome is to identify and map the existing knowledge within the higher education literature pertaining to Islamic finance education for university students and thereafter identify themes and knowledge gaps.

- Step 2-3: relevant studies and study selection

In deriving the literature sample relevant to the research question, we limited the scoping review to articles published only in the Scopus database. We made this decision as the Scopus database provides a comprehensive collection of peer-reviewed and reputable scholarly publications from diverse disciplines while allowing consistency and reproducibility when exploring the research question. We performed an initial search of the Scopus database on March 1st, 2024, and a final search on March 31st, 2024. Our search strategy included a combination of the following keywords to allow for a broad search of the related literature: "Islamic finance education," "Islamic banking education," "university students," and "talent development." We limited the search to a specific period; thus, we searched the database from 1975 in line with the opening of the first Islamic bank up to March 31st, 2024.

All articles that focused on outcomes concerning Islamic finance education involving university students enrolled at higher education institutions were included in the review. All literature about the preceding criteria written in English from sources such as journal articles, conference proceedings, books, and book chapters were eligible for inclusion after reviewing the titles, abstracts where applicable, and full text of the literature. Articles were excluded if the full text was unavailable or the primary focus was not on Islamic finance education, even though the population consisted of university students enrolled in Islamic finance courses.

We identified 298 articles using a combination of the keywords discussed earlier. Figure 1 provides details of the review methodology based on PRISMA guidelines. We then deleted all duplicated articles (n=51).

Thus, the remaining articles' titles, abstracts, and keywords were screened, and all non-English sources (n=3) or sources not relevant to the study (n=188) were removed. We then assessed the full text of the remaining articles (n=56) for eligibility. We removed all sources that did not have university students as the study population and where sources did not have a clear focus on Islamic finance education (n=41). Thus, a total of 15 articles comprising journal articles (n=12), conference papers (n=2), and a book chapter (n=1) were included in this scoping review.

- Step 4: charting the data

In charting the data for the 15 selected articles, we extracted the following information to address the research question: i) name of the author(s); ii) year of publication; iii) location of study; iv) data collection method(s); and v) the key findings of the study.

- Step 5: collating, summarising, and reporting the results

To address the research question, as stated in step 1, we mapped the extant literature in the Scopus database by collating and summarising each study to understand what is known about our topic of interest. The details of the mapped articles are included in Table 1. Guided by each study's purpose and findings, we developed four themes to frame our results, which are reported using a descriptive narrative approach.

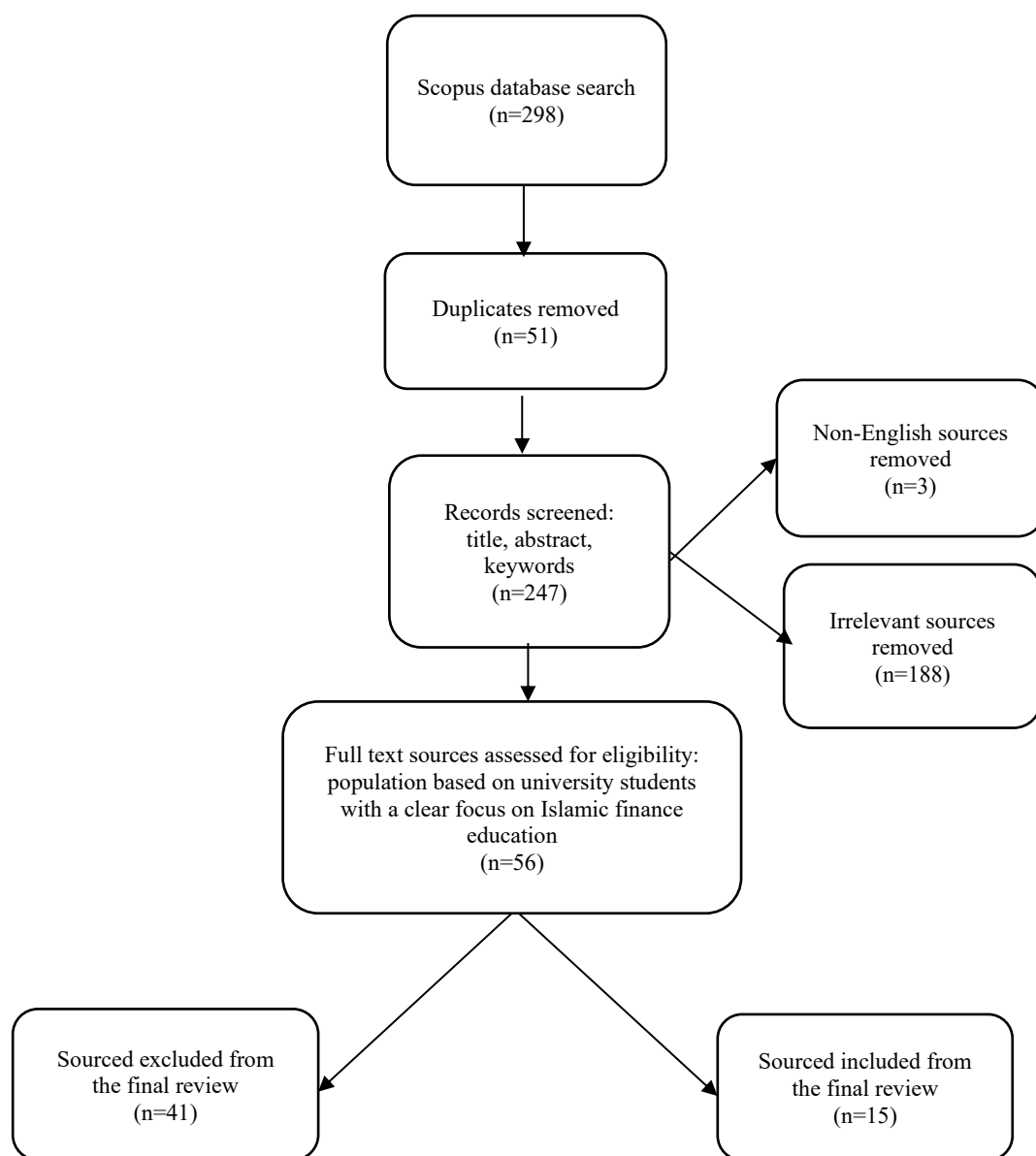


Figure 1. Article selection process

Table 1. Mapping of the identified articles

Authors	Year	Country	Data collection	Key findings
Aziz <i>et al.</i> [35]	2016	Malaysia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Importance of university infrastructure, experienced lecturers, and technology for talent development.
Manan <i>et al.</i> [36]	2018	Malaysia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Graduating students had the potential to meet the shortage of talent requirements in the Islamic finance industry.
Khadijah <i>et al.</i> [37]	2020	Malaysia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	While student competency levels are strong, there is room for improvement in communication, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills to enhance employability.
Aziz <i>et al.</i> [38]	2023	Malaysia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Curriculum variables have a dominant effect on the supply of talent. Where there are shortages in talent, there is more competition among employers.
Aziz <i>et al.</i> [39]	2023	Malaysia	Mixed methods approach using focus group discussions and a survey.	Talent demand and talent supply significantly affect the talent shortage in Malaysia. Factors contributing to the talent shortage included basic salary, employee benefits, flexible working hours, government policy for talent supply, talent, university infrastructure, and curriculum.
Aziz <i>et al.</i> [40]	2019	Malaysia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Employer value proposition (EVP) was identified as a crucial tool in attracting and retaining talent in Malaysian Islamic banking institutions. Factors like basic salary, employee benefits, and flexible working hours significantly influenced talent attraction and retention within the industry.
Yaacob <i>et al.</i> [41]	2014	Brunei	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Undergraduate students in Brunei had a “rudimentary” understanding of shari’ah auditing. Students needed clarification about the primary objective of sharia auditing.
Kibiya <i>et al.</i> [42]	2023	Nigeria	Quantitative approach using a survey.	There are adequate awareness and basic knowledge of Islamic accounting. Students could differentiate between Islamic accounting and conventional accounting. Students were committed to including Islamic accounting as a mandatory course.
Siswantoro [43]	2015	Indonesia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Few students understood Islamic accounting, but the course improved student comprehension levels. Muslim students scored lower on midterm tests compared to non-Muslim students.
Warsame [44]	2017	Malaysia and United Arab Emirates	Quantitative approach using a survey.	The lack of a professional and robust curriculum has a negative impact on student perceptions of Islamic finance courses.
Zulpahmi <i>et al.</i> [45]	2022	Indonesia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Students need more knowledge, information, and insight about implementing sharia governance than microfinance institutions. Students need to decrease the information gap in understanding sharia governance.
Kholid <i>et al.</i> [46]	2020	Indonesia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Job market considerations, ethics, subjective norms, and technical skills were important factors identified that positively affect student intentions to become sharia accountants.
Amin <i>et al.</i> [47]	2009	Malaysia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Attitude, subjective norms, and the amount of information on Islamic accounting are factors that play a role in positively influencing a student’s intention to enroll in Islamic accounting courses.
Kamaruddin and Hanefah [48]	2023	Malaysia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Several challenges exist in adopting an e-learning approach, such as limited hands-on, group, and physical activities, difficulty learning practical and technical topics, and technical issues during e-learning sessions. Despite challenges, participants demonstrated mastery of all modules, highlighting the effectiveness of using an e-learning approach.
Kamaruddin and Hanefah [49]	2022	Malaysia	Quantitative approach using a survey.	Participants could master sharia principles, knowledge, and skills for sharia audits through the e-learning approach.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this review, we scoped the literature published in the Scopus database to address the following research question: what is known about Islamic finance education for university students within the higher education literature? This study aimed to identify the scope of literature on Islamic finance education for university students, map the key themes and finally identify research gaps to guide future research.

A mix of fifteen articles comprising 12 reports of original research (journal articles), two conference papers, and one book chapter were identified and reviewed. The first article was published in 2009; between 2014 and 2022, a minimum of one article was published each year, while in 2023, four articles were published, showing an emerging body of work in this area. Most studies were conducted in Malaysia (n=10), followed by Indonesia (n=2), then Nigeria (n=1), the United Arab Emirates (n=1) and Brunei (n=1). This observation indicates that studies are disproportionately conducted in Malaysia due to its leading role in the IFSI [50]; however, more studies across multiple geographical locations are needed to support talent development and increase the findings' generalisability. The emerging authors in this domain include Aziz *et al.* [35] (n=4), [38]–[40] and Kamaruddin and Hanefah [48], [49] (n=2). Fourteen of the fifteen articles utilized a quantitative approach based on a survey. At the same time, one study followed a mixed methods approach by using focus groups and a survey to collect data. This observation indicates a need for studies using a qualitative or mixed methods approach to understand various aspects of Islamic finance education from students' points of view. Considering each articles purpose, and findings, we grouped similar articles into four emerging themes to enhance clarity in analysis and facilitate the subsequent discussion to meet the research objectives.

3.1. Talent development in Islamic banking education (six articles identified)

The first theme from the selected articles relates to talent development in Islamic banking education. These articles consider issues related to talent shortages, talent development, and talent retention, which are essential in sustaining and growing the IFSI. Six studies have been identified that explored the various dynamics of talent management within the Malaysian context. Aziz *et al.* [35] study highlights universities' vital role in developing talent for the Islamic banking sector. For instance, factors such as university infrastructure, experienced faculty, and the use of technology all contribute to the development of a skilled workforce for the industry. Manan *et al.* [36] and Khadijah *et al.* [37] add that despite graduates needing improvements in their soft skills, students had the talent and skill to meet industry requirements. Thus, these studies show the importance of universities in cultivating talent for the IFSI. However, talent shortages persist within the industry despite the potential of graduates, as highlighted by Aziz *et al.* [38], [39]. Talent shortages arise because of factors such as curriculum design, government policies, and organizational incentives; thus, competition for talent among employers increases when talent shortages are found. The study by Aziz *et al.* [40] provides insights into tackling talent shortages by examining the concept of EVP to create an enabling work environment, thereby attracting, and retaining talent through factors such as salary, benefits, and favourable working conditions.

Areas for future research within this theme could consider the various talent development practices and challenges across different countries, providing insights into the nuances influencing talent development in Islamic banking education. Studies could consider the talent attraction and retention strategies within selected institutions. Studies could examine the role of soft skills and their impact on career progression with the IFSI. Finally, studies could also consider how universities and industry collaborate to develop and prepare graduates for success in the industry.

3.2. Curriculum and education quality (five articles identified)

The second theme from the selected articles relates to curriculum and education quality. These articles consider issues related to curriculum design, education quality, awareness, and understanding among Islamic finance, accounting, and governance education students. Studies in this area have explored diverse geographical locations, showing the importance of curriculum design and awareness among students of Islamic finance education. Yaacob *et al.* [41] reveal that while Brunei students understood some aspects of sharia auditing, they needed to grasp the primary purpose of a sharia audit, indicating a need for more targeted educational programs in this area. The findings by Kibiya *et al.* [42] and Siswanto [43] highlight student's awareness and comprehension of Islamic accounting principles; for instance, in Nigeria, students had satisfactory levels of awareness while in Indonesia, the awareness levels and understanding of students needed improvement. The studies by Warsame [44] and Zulpahmi *et al.* [45] focused on areas related to curriculum design and content. These studies emphasize the importance of having robust curricula for Islamic finance education that align with industry requirements to enhance student engagement and satisfaction while simultaneously reducing knowledge gaps among students.

Studies across geographical locations should continue exploring curriculum frameworks and educational interventions that meet student and industry requirements. Studies could examine student perceptions of Islamic finance education programs to inform and improve curriculum development. Moreover, future studies could explore the essential skills needed for professionals entering the IFSI. Lastly, research could also focus on the effectiveness of different teaching methods in enhancing learning outcomes for Islamic finance education.

3.3. Student career aspirations and intentions (two articles identified)

The third theme from the selected articles relates to student career aspirations and intentions. These articles focused on the decision-making processes and preferences related to students' future professional careers. The studies by Kholid *et al.* [46] and Amin *et al.* [47] shed light on the factors influencing a student's career aspirations and intentions across different educational settings. For instance, factors such as job market considerations, ethics, subjective norms, and technical skills are essential in the Indonesian educational context, while attitude, subjective norms, and information availability are crucial factors in the Malaysian educational context. By considering these factors, academic institutions can explore different strategies, for example, reviewing their curriculum and instructional methods to enhance awareness and engagement in preparing students for careers in the IFSI.

Additional research is needed to explore factors that influence a student's career intentions across multiple geographical contexts to strengthen the existing findings and to provide a more holistic understanding of the global landscape of Islamic finance education. More studies in this area will allow for identifying similarities and differences in student career intentions across multiple countries. Qualitative and mixed-method studies are also needed to deepen our understanding of the underlying reasons behind students' career decision-making processes in entering the IFSI.

3.4. E-learning and technology in education (two articles identified)

The fourth theme from the selected articles relates to e-learning and technology in education. These articles focused on the role of technology, mainly the opportunities and challenges in delivering online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The studies by Kamaruddin and Hanefah [48], [49] highlight the effectiveness of using e-learning modalities to train prospective sharia auditors. Some limitations when using e-learning were identified, for example, technical difficulties experienced or the lack of hands-on or practical activities. Despite these challenges, participants could still gain the knowledge and skills required for sharia auditors using an e-learning approach. These studies demonstrate the opportunities for professional training using e-learning and highlight the challenges and limitations when using this medium to transfer knowledge and skills.

Research efforts could be directed toward developing comprehensive frameworks to address the design and delivery of e-learning programs for Islamic finance education. Research could explore the impact of e-learning on a participant's knowledge retention, skill development, and job performance within the IFSI. Lastly, research could also examine how the variations in educational practices across countries shape the implementation and outcomes of e-learning initiatives directed toward Islamic finance education.

4. CONCLUSION

This scoping review provides a snapshot of articles in the Scopus database about Islamic finance education involving university students enrolled at higher education institutions. Fifteen articles were identified and mapped, showing what is known about the subject matter. Subsequently, four research areas or themes were identified in the literature, namely "talent development in Islamic banking education," "curriculum and education quality," "student career aspirations and intentions," and "e-learning and technology in education." Finally, a few areas for future research are suggested based on the scope of the current studies. The results of this scoping review are essential in guiding researchers in future endeavors, thereby supporting calls in the literature for more research on Islamic finance education to meet industry demands.

This scoping review was limited to articles included in the Scopus database. Thus, relevant literature in other databases, such as the Web of Science and Google Scholar, were not included in this review. The review was also limited in that non-English articles were excluded; thus, relevant literature may have been overlooked. The study used a search strategy comprising four keywords: "Islamic finance education," "Islamic banking education," "University students," and "talent development," which itself creates a potential limitation as relevant articles that adopt alternative terminologies and keywords may have been excluded. Lastly, while every effort was taken to include articles that met the inclusion criteria based on established protocols, interpretation bias is inherent in scoping reviews.

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This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Riyad Moosa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ahmed Mohammadali Haji					✓					✓				✓

C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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